



MADE TO LAST

Education Resource

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**A Nets Victoria Exhibition in partnership with The Centre For Cultural Materials Conservation
at The University Of Melbourne and supported by Latrobe Regional Gallery**

Curated by Sherryn Vardy

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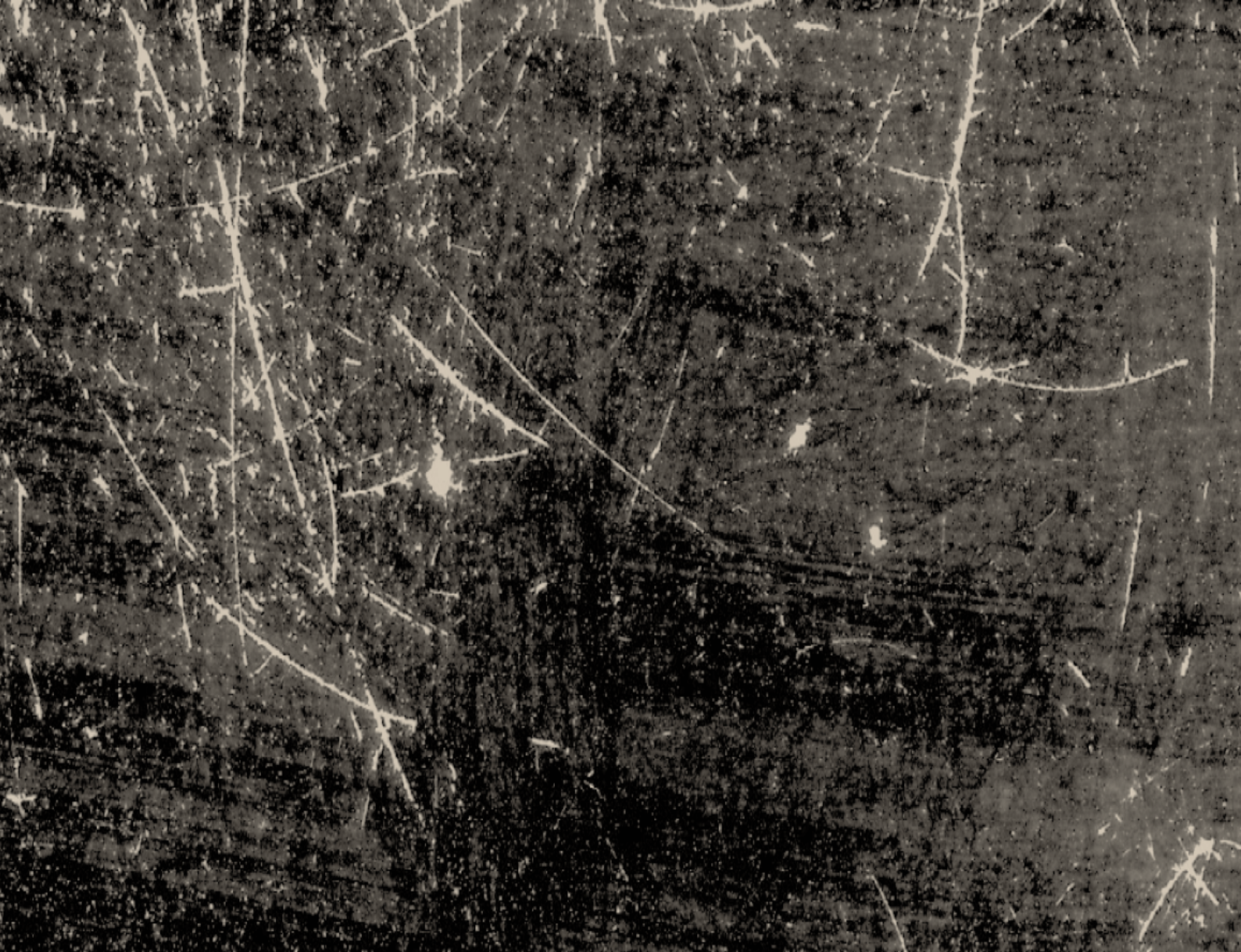
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About this Education Resource

This education resource is intended for use as a starting point to generate discussion and activities before, during and after a visit to *Made to last: the conservation of art*. It is designed to be used in conjunction with information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the NETS Victoria website.

The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, definitions of key terms, artist profiles, suggested points for discussion, activities for students, and references for further research. Teachers may select relevant aspects of this resource to tailor their own response sheet for use in the exhibition.

Planning your visit

Before visiting *Made to last* it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following:

- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and admission fees
- Suitability of content for the year level you intend to bring
- Staff availability for introductory talks and tours
- Education and public programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition

Before your visit you may wish to discuss the following with your students:

- An introduction and background to issues of conservation in art (see this resource – Introduction)
- Your expectations for appropriate behaviour at a gallery, in regards to the safety of both students and artworks, and given that a gallery is a public space

Curriculum links and themes

Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where possible contact your local gallery for other ideas and suggestions. Issues around conservation of artworks are especially relevant to students of VCE Unit 4, Studio Arts. It is highly recommended for year 12 students, but would be very useful for year 11 Studio Arts students as an introduction, in preparation for year 12. However this exhibition is relevant to all art students. This document is designed to be used by students at VELS levels 5 and 6, and VCE Units 1-4, however the material may be easily tailored to suit younger students.

Please note, if you are making an in-depth study of the technical aspects of conservation, the Made to last catalogue is an invaluable resource and contains more detailed information than this resource, which takes a broader view of the issues.

Visual/Creative/Studio Arts (Domain: Disciplinary Learning)

- Methods and considerations involved in the conservation of artworks
- Art issues and commentaries (Keith Haring mural conservation controversy)
- Artists' practice, ideas and inspiration
- Responding to artworks: formal analysis and interpreting meanings and messages
- Exploring artists' personal and cultural perspectives
- Exploring symbols and metaphors expressed in artworks
- Exploring possibilities for materials, processes and techniques

Philosophy, Ethics (Domain: Interdisciplinary Learning - Thinking)

- The role of art in society, its' economic currency
- The ethics of representation, the intentions of the author
- Our relationship with time – learning from the past, influencing the future
- The impulse to resist the inevitability of death and decay

Career pathways in the art industry (Domain: Physical, Personal and Social Learning)

- How artists combine employment in the arts industry with a professional practice
- How those with an interest in both science and the arts can find a professional niche

Introduction

What is conservation?

Conservation is a term that refers to a fundamental function of our culture: how we protect and care for our cultural artefacts and artworks (collectively referred to as cultural material). These items form a crucial cultural link between our present moment, our past and our future. Taking care of objects that carry cultural information is an age-old practice that can be as complex as the meticulous restoration of a Renaissance oil painting by a skilled conservator, or as simple as keeping old photographs carefully in an album (or even backing up your computer files!). The objects that we care about reflect the values we hold dear.

In practical terms, the word conservation encompasses three main areas: preservation, conservation and restoration.

Preservation aims to stabilise objects to extend their lives for as long as possible without the need for treatment. Preservation enables collections managers and curators to prevent damages so that conservation treatments are not necessary. Conservation involves a treatment program to decrease deterioration and stabilise an object, with the least possible intervention. Restoration involves physical intervention to the structure and materials of the object in order to recreate the original appearance of the work. The term 'stabilise' means to halt the process of deterioration of an object as much as possible. Everything that has a material existence is subject to changes brought about by its interaction with its environment. Conservators have to juggle the practical possibilities of the

materials they work with, with the needs of cultural institutions and the intentions of the artist who made the work.

For some twentieth and twenty-first century artists, the physical deterioration of an artwork is accepted, and maybe even be encouraged by the artist. This kind of work can be described as 'ephemeral', i.e. it has a limited lifespan. This idea is about the acceptance of mortality – something found challenging by those from a European cultural tradition – indicating the influence of a more Buddhist or Eastern philosophy on Western culture.

Some artworks only exist as a list of instructions for their assemblage. Artists such as American artist Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) and contemporary Australian artist Kerrie Poliness, provide galleries with a list of instructions on how to recreate their elaborate wall drawings. This challenges the idea that it is the art object itself that is of primary importance, and that there is something unique about the way a particular artist makes a mark. It makes the idea or the concept of the artwork the most important thing.



A Kerrie Poliness wall drawing being completed
(sited at <http://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/arts-and-entertainment/article/networks-cells-silos-muma>)



Claire Anna WATSON, *Sortie (still)*, 2009, video: HD 1920 x 1080 p, 4:42 minutes, Courtesy of the artist

Being a professional conservator is a highly skilled occupation that requires considerable scientific knowledge, especially of chemistry. The materials used require careful handling. Conservators often need to have scientific qualifications to allow them to understand and predict how various materials will behave.

The conservator's job has become increasingly complex and interesting over time. During the twentieth century new types of paint (such as acrylics) became available; artists' relationships with materials changed as they explored new art forms such as the ready-made, performance, conceptual and installation art. Photographic documentation of artwork has become a standard practice for artists, for communication purposes, but also to maintain an accurate record of the way the artwork looked when it was first made. Conservators now discuss with artists what their intentions were for their artwork, and how to best proceed with conservation issues. Some artists choose to have their work made or 'fabricated' by professional model makers or fabricators. The conservator can also draw on the expertise and experience of these professionals in making conservation decisions.

"Made to last: the conservation of art brings together five living contemporary artists who use a range of complex materials in their work: found, manufactured and conventional. While some materials a conservator encounters may be unstable, an instability of a different kind is evident in the themes of the five artists included in Made to last involving the impact of humanity on the world, past, present and future." Sherry Vardy, curator

“I love that conservation is an interdisciplinary field in which you learn many different skills and are able to bring your own experience to the profession. The combination of art and science is very exciting; forensics for artwork (I do enjoy watching murder mysteries!). There is a lot of problem solving and investigation as well as highly detailed work, which I find fascinating. As conservation is a relatively new and specialised profession many of the tools are borrowed from other professions. For example, conservators use dental and medical tools for fine work, and a range of scientific equipment for sample testing - the techniques are constantly evolving.”

Sherryn Vardy, curator

Sherryn Vardy

Sherryn has a Bachelor (1998) and a Graduate Diploma (1999) of Visual Arts, majoring in painting, from Monash University and will complete her Masters of Cultural Material Conservation at the University of Melbourne in 2012. As part of her studies she undertook a three-week internship with the Queensland Art Gallery Paintings Conservation Department in 2011.

Vardy has a diverse background in the gallery sector gained through over ten years experience in regional galleries, holding positions such as Gallery Assistant and Assistant Curator. Sherryn is currently Exhibitions Manager at National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Victoria where she is responsible for managing the delivery of their extensive touring exhibition program.

While Vardy was an art student, she had never even thought about conservation. After graduating she worked at various art galleries, and undertook a residency at Cowwarr Art Space in Gippsland. One day while visiting the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, she was struck to see a painting surrounded by scaffolding. The painting was *Vive L'Empereur* (1891) by Edouard Detaille. Alongside the scaffolding was a video that showed the journey of the painting – its transportation to a conservation studio, conservators working on the painting, the end result of the conservation work. Vardy was transfixed by the process, and soon began her own journey into the study of conservation.

The Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation

The Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC) is part of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. The only centre of its kind in Australia, it combines studies of both the theory and practice of cultural material conservation. The Centre has responsibility for the conservation of the University of Melbourne's collections of cultural material and provides conservation treatments and advice for individuals and organisations.

The CCMC offers specialist courses in conservation and art authentication. Specialisations include conservation treatment of paintings, works on paper, frames, and object and architectural conservation, research and technical analysis. The Centre also conducts research programs, in collaboration with national and international organisations.

A question of authenticity: The Keith Haring mural conservation controversy

New York-based artist and social-activist, Keith Haring, who died in 1990, visited Australia in 1984, where he undertook art projects in Melbourne and Sydney. His mural on Johnston Street, Collingwood, in Melbourne, is one of only thirty-one known murals by Haring across the world to have survived to this day. The mural on the side of the former Collingwood TAFE building is an important legacy for the Victorian community. It was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in 2004. Arts Victoria took over management of the site in 2010 when it was identified as the location for the new Circus Oz headquarters. Construction work has recently started on this project and as a result a protective hoarding has been erected around the mural. This will safeguard the mural during the works but means that it is not currently visible to the public.

There have been a number of differing opinions voiced on how the Keith Haring mural should be protected. A discussion about the issues was broadcast on 1st February 2012 on the ABC Radio National program Books and Arts Daily, hosted by Michael Cathcart. Here are some extracts from the transcript of the program. To understand the subtleties of the issues involved it is necessary to read the full transcript, which is available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/booksandartsdaily/books-and-arts-daily-1-february-2012/3804076>

"I think the proper process should be followed to arrive at a sustainable result of the preservation of the Haring mural, as well as other important works in the public domain. An independent consultant was contracted by the government to determine the basic path of the treatment and they considered all the options and opted for a preservation treatment on a broad outline. And the next step is for Heritage Victoria to issue a permit so a tender can be put out for a comprehensive proposal of treatment, to include the materials and techniques to be used and so on. [My recommendation is] to stabilise the paint and to hopefully enhance the appearance through the manipulation of the saturation of the pigment dispersion. This is different from over-painting it; this will retain the original brushstrokes of Keith Haring, which I think are important. And finally it is to have a program of routine periodic maintenance." Tom Dixon, former Chief Conservator for the National Gallery of Victoria, Deputy Chair of the Victorian Public Art Committee at the National Trust

Below: Keith Haring mural, March 1984. Johnston Street, Collingwood (sited at www.deansunshine.com)



What happened?

After a public submission process, Heritage Victoria has issued a permit for works to repair and protect the heritage-listed mural and bring back its visibility and vitality.

The permit allows for:

- Research and technical investigation works;
- Works to protect the mural from rising damp and UV damage;
- Repair and reinstatement of damaged or lost paint and render;
- Retouching of red and yellow paint subject to technical investigations;
- Cleaning and consolidation treatments, and landscaping works in the surrounding area.

Arts Victoria will soon open a tender for both Australian and international conservators to undertake the works, many of whom have already expressed their interest in the project.

“I guess from the very beginning my support has always been with the interests of the artist, and the artist, Keith Haring, died early at the age of 31, so his interests are represented by the Keith Haring Foundation that he established before his death. And they have publicly stated that they require the repainting of the mural. The deterioration and damage is so extensive that they require the whole thing to be repainted.”

Hannah Matthews, curator, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

“The mural is an extremely important work by a major twentieth century artist, Keith Haring, who I’m sure everyone knows was a superstar in the 1980s in New York and subsequently around the world. He did a handful of murals, of which quite a number survived. Yes, this should be a treasure for the local and national and international community... I completely, totally, thoroughly respect the point of view of Hannah Matthews and the other people who just want a beautiful bright mural in their community. I understand, it was that way in 1984 and it’s not that way any more, and I respect their point of view. Many communities feel this way about their murals, they are powerful statements of social commentary and of art, and they should have a beautiful bright mural. It just can’t be on the same wall that Keith Haring chose, and there are options of recreating the mural, recreating a facsimile of the mural and they should be encouraged to do so... It will not be a Keith Haring, it will never be the 1984 mural again, regardless of who wins this battle.

What we’re really talking about is authenticity. So should the mural be painted by a sign painter, you wind up with a replica, with a facsimile, and this could well serve the needs of the community but it will lack the essence of the authentic thing.” Will Shank, international art conservator and co-director of ‘Rescue Public Murals’

“Yes, but this is an arguable point, where the authenticity lies; is it in the artist’s hand or is it in the image? Because it’s a graphic image, highly reproduced, as many of Keith’s works were.”

Hannah Matthews

Discussion points

- What is the important cultural material that you take care of – the items that carry important information about your identity and your history?
- How do you go about taking care of them?
- How many different environmental factors can you think of, that can change material objects?
- What do you think is the most important aspect of an artwork – the object or the idea?
- Which of the points of view expressed in the Keith Haring discussion do you most agree with? Why?

Activity

- Research some artists from the last 50 years who have made ephemeral artworks. Has there been any attempt to conserve or re-create their works? How has this been achieved?
- Research the life and work of Keith Haring. Where are his other murals found?
- Write a letter to Arts Victoria, outlining your position on the conservation of the Keith Haring mural in Johnston Street. Your generation will be able to enjoy it in the future. What do you think should happen to it and why? (You could send the letter if you like, but make sure to get permission from your teacher first.)



Juan FORD, *An Imminent Silhouette* 2007, oil on linen, 66 x 51 cm, Courtesy of the artist, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

Key conservation terms

There are two aspects to conservation: preservation and conservation.

Preservation

Preservation aims to stabilise objects to extend their lives for as long as possible without the need for treatment. Preservation enables collections managers and curators to prevent damages so that conservation treatments are not necessary.

Conservation

Conservation involves a treatment program to decrease deterioration and stabilise an object, with the least possible intervention.

Restoration

Now less commonly used, restoration involves physical intervention to the structure and materials of the object in order to recreate the original appearance of the work.

Common conservation terms

(for a more detailed list of terms refer to the *Made to Last* catalogue)

Acid

An acid is a corrosive compound with a pH level less than seven. Acidity and alkalinity are measured on a pH scale from zero to fourteen, with seven being pH neutral. Acid present in materials used in artwork, may lead to discolouration over time, reducing the legibility and value of the work.

Acrylic

Acrylics are paints made from pigments bound in a synthetic resin medium. They tend to dry faster than organic oil media such as linseed oil.

Archival quality

Archival quality materials are made for longevity and chemical stability, such as the acid free pulp used to make archival quality mount board.

Condition report

A condition report is a document that details the condition of an object and is used as a tool to determine change in the object over time. Ideally, condition reports should be produced as soon as an object is acquired. They may also be produced as part of a collection survey, prior to conservation treatment or as documentation to accompany travelling exhibitions or loans.

Cracks – drying

Drying cracks occur during drying of paint layers, and are caused by chemical and physical processes, confined to the paint layer. Mostly stable, these cracks often have 'rounded' edges and do not penetrate to the canvas layer.

Discolouration / Fading

Media may decompose over time due to natural changes in their chemical composition. This process may be accelerated through exposure to environmental conditions such as light, oxygen, and humidity and may lead to discolouration of the media, such as fading or darkening.

Foxing

Foxing appears as brown circular spotting found on paper works. The spots may be from mould or metal impurities in the paper sheet. Foxing usually results from exposure of a print to high relative humidity in damp places.

Friable

Friable refers to surfaces that are loose and powdery. For example, coloured pigments which are not bound well to the surface (such as some Aboriginal artefacts or pastel drawings) will be friable.

In painting

Where there are small losses to the media or support of an artwork, the missing part of the design is sometimes in painted.

Lumen

Lumen is the measurement unit for the quantity—as opposed to the intensity of light given out by a light source. The lumen measurement remains constant for a light source and does not alter if the readings are taken at a greater distance from the light source. Measurements of light intensity, which vary according to distance from the light source, are known as lux.

Lux

Lux is the measurement unit used to record the intensity to which a surface is lit, or the brightness of the light. Lux varies according to the distance from the light source. Lux can be measured by a lux meter and is calculated in terms of one lumen per square metre.

Medium (or media)

Medium is a word usually applied to the binding material that holds pigments together in paint.

pH

pH is a scale of measurement ranging from zero to fourteen for identifying the level of acidity of solutions – the hydrogen ion H⁺ concentration. Pure water has a pH of seven, which is considered neutral, whereas acidic solutions fall below seven and alkaline solutions have pH values exceeding seven.

Relative humidity

Relative humidity (RH) is the amount of water vapour contained in the air at a particular temperature compared with the total amount of water vapour the air can contain at that temperature, and is expressed as a percentage. Materials respond differently over a range of humidity levels and there is an optimum level of relative humidity suitable for the display and storage of specific materials. The suggested RH for a mixed collection would be in the range of 45–55%. The temperature of a mixed collection should be stabilised to avoid fluctuations, which may cause stress to certain materials.

Solander Box

This is a box with a hinged lid, made from very thick card (5-10mm, covered with leather or paper). Solander boxes are used to store smaller works on paper, including maps, documents, books or photographs. The bottom of the box has a lip, over which the lid snugly sits, sealing the contents inside, protecting them from changes in humidity, and insect damage. Daniel Solander (1733–82) was a Swedish botanist who invented the Solander box whilst working at the British Museum as Keeper of Printed Books. He also used his boxes to store botanical specimens on his travels to Australia with Captain James Cook on The Endeavour.

Stretcher

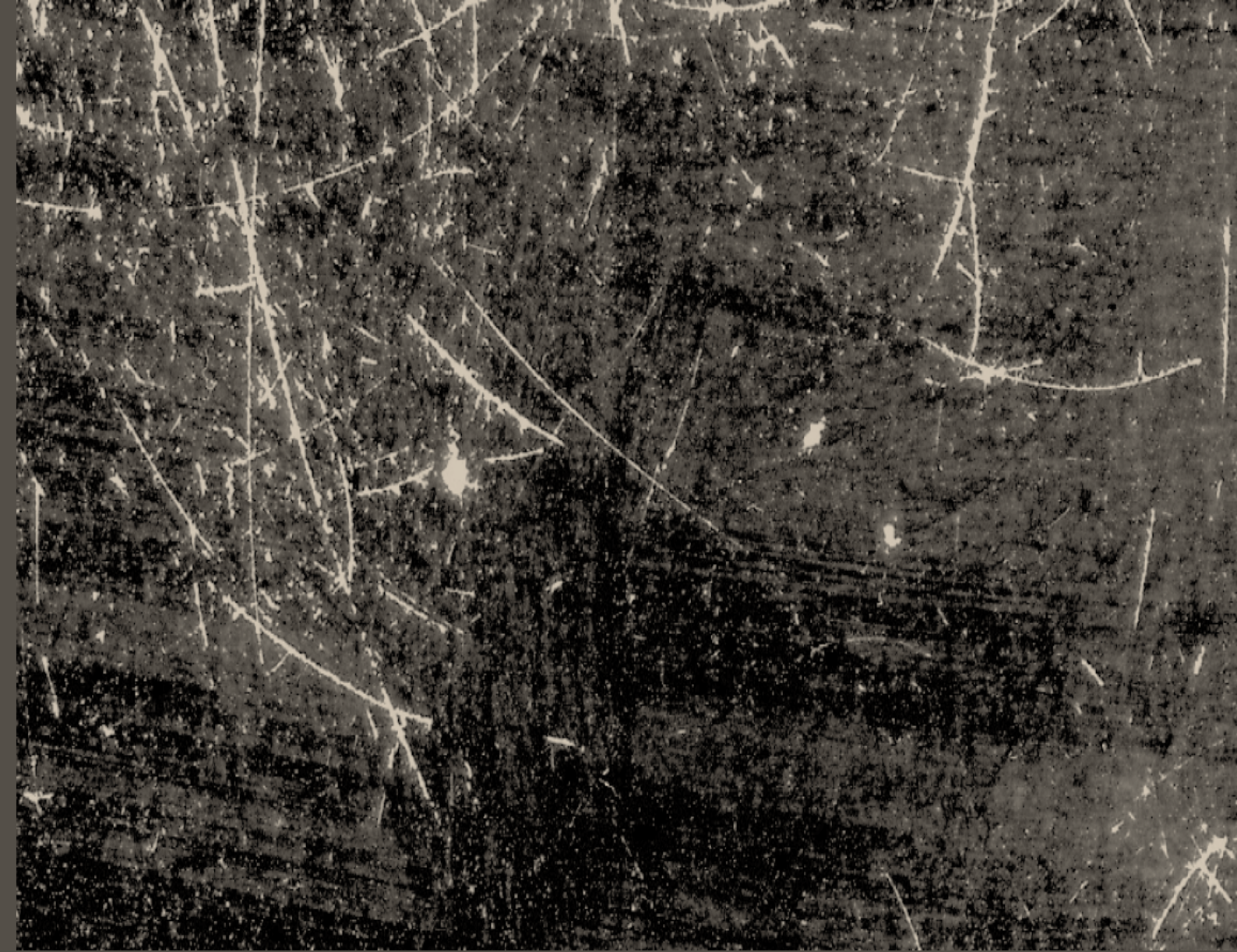
In painting, a stretcher is a wooden frame over which a fabric support is stretched. Corners are not fixed, but can be expanded using wedges or keys at the corners, thus tightening the canvas.

Varnish

Varnish is a clear protective coating, usually with resin content, applied over a paint fill.

Window mount

Works on paper are often framed by a piece of board into which a window has been cut, known as a window mount. It serves to separate the work from the glazing inside a frame or another work, which may be stored on top of it in a Solander box.



Artist profiles and works with activities and discussion points

Brook Andrew

"My work challenges cultural and historical perceptions, using installation, text and image to comment on local and global issues regarding race, consumerism and history. Apart from drawing inspiration from public media and found archival collections, I travel nationally and internationally to work with communities and museum collections and display to comment and create new work reflecting objects, concepts and local thought." Brook Andrew



Brook ANDREW, *Legions of War Widows Face Dire Need in Iraq*, 2009 woodblock print on hand made kikuban hankusa kouzosi tansyoku Japanese paper, Courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

“His work with archival material has created debate and new thought surrounding contemporary philosophies regarding memory, its conceptual and visual potency linking local with international histories. By co-opting the tools of advertising, the media, museums and Wiradjuri language and culture, Brook Andrew’s art challenges the limitations imposed by power structures, historical amnesia, stereotyping and complicity.”

Laura Murray Cree, ‘Brook Andrew’, Artist Profile, Issue 11, 2010, pp. 50-59.

Brook Andrew was born in 1970 and grew up in Sydney. Since 2004 Andrew has lived and worked in Melbourne. He is of Wiradjuri and Scottish descent. Before settling in the area of visual art, he spent a brief time studying Interior Design, and his work as a visual artist reflects an innate sensitivity to space and environment. His artwork utilises a broad range of materials to explore themes of memory and culture, historical amnesia, power structures and stereotyping.

Andrew works with a variety of scales, creating large-scale installations in public sites such as Sydney International Airport Terminal, where he installed twenty-two neon boomerangs in a work titled *Wilbing (to fly)* 1999-2000. He uses neon tubes to create suspended sculptures that can subtly inhabit gallery buildings, blending into interior design features or drawing attention with their eerie glow. Other materials utilised include images from postcards and other found cultural material, from different periods in history – some very rare and old, some are from more recent times.

Andrew has a particular interest in the way that information and artefacts are arranged in museums and collections, and how these affect the reading of the information. His research has taken him to many different locations internationally to examine different institutions. He has travelled to France, The Netherlands, Lithuania, India and Chile. This gives his work a broad, global perspective. Whether in photography, neon, sculpture or screen-print, Andrew explores power relationships inherent in our society, especially in relation to issues of and globalism.

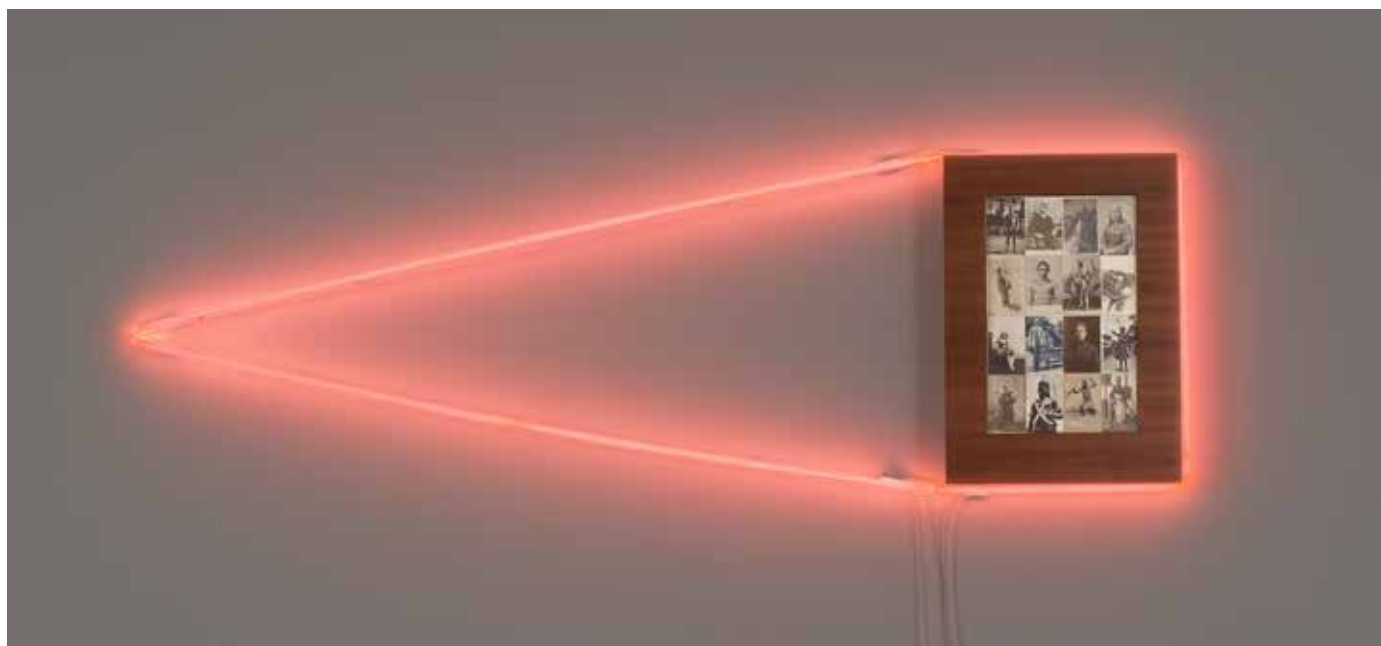
Materials

Brook Andrew does not utilise a singular medium or skill – his broad education in art and design, and his commitment to language in a broad sense, allow him to select appropriate materials according to the message of each individual art project or work. Some materials and techniques he has used include: printmaking, photography, text-based work, neon sculpture, inflatable installation works, and performance.

Andrew’s attitude to his materials is that the final works are a synergy of the (found) source material, the idea behind the work, and the materials and techniques used to create the work. There is something potentially magical about this mix of elements, and the manner in which they are woven together is not always a conscious choice, or a logical equation – $a + b + c = x$.

Andrew accepts that sometimes his message may become secondary to creating a seductive or immersive experience for the audience. In that case, the choice of materials can become dominant.

His attitude to his artworks is that once they have left the studio, they are part of public life, and he accepts that they will be subject to conservation, and may need to be re-made at some point. Having worked with curators and conservators in public institutions all around the world, he has a great respect for their expertise, and trusts his work in their hands.



Brook ANDREW, *Men*, 2011, rare postcards, sapele and neon, Courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Creating and making

Select a theme and see if you can find images from the media that represent that theme.

- Look for images from the past as well as contemporary ones. You can often find old magazines in op shops, or you might find old images on the internet, or in the library. You can print them out or photocopy them. Think about how you might arrange them into an artwork.

What are the material issues you need to consider?

- Will you collage them onto a board, or will you think of an alternative way to combine them. If you need to use glue, what kind will you use? Guess how long your artwork will last without conservation.



Brook ANDREW, *Paradise 6 (blue)*, 2011 rare postcards, sapele and neon
Courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Exploring and responding

- Look at the postcard images in Andrew's work *Men* (2011). What links the various images? What do they have in common? Find as many different themes as you can.
- Discuss the relationship between the different elements in this work: the neon tubing, the postcard images and the frame.
- What effect does the neon tubing have on the postcards?
- What could the shape of the neon light mean or suggest?
- In small groups discuss the meaning of the work *Legions of War Widows Face Dire Need in Iraq* (2009). What is the relationship between the image and the text? Get one of your team to report back to the main group. Did different answers come up?
- What are the conservation issues presented by the materials that Brook Andrew uses?

VCE Art/Studio Art

- What are the conservation issues that might arise in Andrew's work *Paradise 6 (blue)* (2011)? List them. Research the life span of a neon tube. What is it made from? How long does it last?
- Develop a draft preservation/conservation strategy for *Paradise 6 (blue)* to present to a gallery director for approval.
- How do you think Brook Andrew's personal and cultural background has influenced his practice? How has it influenced his choice of materials? How has it influenced his subject matter?
- Compare the formal elements of *Paradise 6 (blue)* and *Men*. Why has the artist chosen similar yet different strategies for each work?
- Discuss the meanings and messages expressed in the work *Even a Failing Mind Feels the Tug of History* (2009). What is the relationship between the message and the materials? Why has the artist chosen these materials and techniques?

Penny Byrne

"I meticulously construct manipulated figurines from damaged and antiquated ceramic objects into artworks that fiercely wield a political message. The use of fragile ceramics contradicts the political issues evident in my work. A satirical viewpoint confronts a number of contemporary political issues that present an ongoing inquiry into popular culture and international politics. My training as a ceramics conservator informs my practice." Penny Byrne



Penny BYRNE, *H5N1 Mutant Strain*, 2011, porcelain figurine, vintage action man gas mask, porcelain chickens, epoxy resin, re-touching medium, powder pigments Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

Penny Byrne was born in 1965 and grew up in Mildura. Her father was a solicitor and her mother ran an antique shop, so as a child she was surrounded by antiques. It was the ceramics that attracted her most. She attained her Bachelor of Fine Arts specialising in ceramics from RMIT University in Melbourne in 1987. She went on to study Ceramics and Glass Conservation and Restoration in the United Kingdom. As well as maintaining her studio practice, she works as a museum ceramics conservator. In 1997 she completed a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) at La Trobe University, Melbourne, and she retains a passion for human rights advocacy.

There are some similarities between the approaches taken by Penny Byrne and Brook Andrew. Both engage with public art institutions and museums through their work. Both artists draw on existing cultural objects and images, reworking them to challenge and provoke audiences into questioning their assumptions about that material. Whereas Andrew often leaves his work with an open-ended question, Byrne's artworks can be very direct in their message, using titles to direct the viewer to consider specific political events. Byrne searches eBay and op shops to source delicate ceramic figurines. She utilises her understanding of ceramics restoration techniques to change the structure of the figurines to suit her message. She adds new colours and objects to the sculptures to subvert the story told by the sculptures.

This process can be playful, despite the seriousness of the message – the first time that she intervened with a sculpture was during an assessment whilst studying ceramics conservation. Her task was to restore a porcelain statue of a woman with a dog at her feet.

“I made a pink bow and put it round the dog’s neck. I didn’t say anything to the assessors. I just left it to see if they would pick up on it. And they didn’t. That was my first naughty little act.” Penny Byrne, interview with Joyce Morgan for the Sydney Morning Herald, 2007

It is the playfulness and kitsch value of the little porcelain statues that attract her, and she uses that cuteness to seduce the audience. The works are charming and funny, but their feminine delicacy and fragility contrasts with the strong political and social commentary that they make. In an interview for the Artscape program on ABC TV in April 2010, her father likened her work to ‘political cartoons in 3D’.

Materials

Penny Byrne's materials are quite specific, and they are integral to the messages her works convey. There is a satirical interplay between the ceramic figures and the additions that Byrne makes to them. Figurines are intended to be simply decorative, reassuring presences that inhabit our domestic space, but in Byrne's hands they become performers in miniature political theatres. Her training has given her the skills to seamlessly rework the sculptures, but she only uses cheap, broken or discarded figurines: “I do have a limit. I won't destroy important decorative art,” she told Joyce Morgan during an interview for the Sydney Morning Herald. “But the vintage ones, which are poor copies of the original, I think they're just asking for trouble.”

Like Brook Andrew, Penny Byrne's training as a conservator and her professional experience in that field provide her with a confidence in the expertise of institutions and conservators to make the best decisions for the preservation and conservation of her work. She sees her work as having an independent life once it has left her studio. She has a professional photographer document each work, and this is a very important aspect of conserving the work. She is happy for any conservation work to be undertaken on her artworks, and although she admits that it would be nice to be consulted she maintains that this is not necessary.

Exploring and responding

- Can you identify the political themes or events referred to in Penny Byrne's work displayed in this exhibition?
- Discuss the meaning of the work *Tea for Two in Tuvalu* (2011).
- If you don't know what or where Tuvalu is, do some research and find out about it.
- How has your research changed your understanding of *Tea for Two in Tuvalu*?
- Humour is an important aspect of Penny Byrne's work. Do you think the work *Murder on the Dance Floor No 7* (2011) is funny? What makes something funny? What are the formal aspects of this work that contribute to its humour?

Creating and making

The figurines in *Tea for Two in Tuvalu* look like they might be having a conversation. Write an imaginary script for the characters in this sculpture. You can include the other life forms in your dialogue if you like. Get your friends to help you act out your script for your class. Perhaps you could film your short play.

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Make a formal and cultural comparison between the work of Penny Byrne and that of Brook Andrew.
- Make a formal and cultural comparison between the work of Penny Byrne and a valuable antique figurine (choose your own, from a magazine, book or website). Discuss how the messages in the objects differ.
- Discuss the cultural influences that are present in Penny Byrne's sculptures. What do the figurines suggest? Why are they mostly dressed in eighteenth century European costume? How does that impact on the meanings and messages in the work?
- Comment on how Penny Byrne's sculptures have been displayed in this exhibition. What creative alternatives can you think of for their presentation in an exhibition?
- Discuss the use of colour in Byrne's work *In the Land of the Free They Call David a Terrorist, at Home He Was Just a Hick* (2006).
- Do you think the role of art should be to make strong political statements? If not, why not?



Penny BYRNE, *Tea for Two in Tuvalu*, 2011, vintage porcelain figurine, vintage Action Man accessories, vintage coral, glass fish, epoxy resin, epoxy putty, re-touching medium, powder pigments, Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

Juan Ford

"My practice has consistently been engaged with opening up new possibilities for realism in painting. I have employed many strategies that argue around the theoretical 'problems' of realism in painting. I enjoy exploiting the limited shortcomings of the dull, officially sanctioned dialogue between painting and it's would-be executioner, photography, in order to develop new potential for realism. While my work evolves and varies across time, it characteristically involves an examination of our schismatic relationship to the natural environment." Juan Ford



Juan FORD, *The Emissary*, 2007, oil on linen, Courtesy of the artist, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

“What he looks like is beside the point, there’s no need to represent that. That wouldn’t explain anything. But the lonesome pilgrim, going who knows where, keeps coming to mind. It’s a funny image, simultaneously serious and absurd...everyone is a pilgrim of sorts, and this pilgrim is me.”

Juan Ford speaking about his Archibald finalist self-portrait, *Ultrapilgrim*

Juan Ford, born in 1973, lives and works in Melbourne. He completed a Masters by Research, RMIT University, Melbourne, in 2001. Ford grew up in a town on the outskirts of Melbourne. As a student he had an interest in science, and began an engineering degree, but soon changed to become an art student at RMIT. He is intrigued by history, and the history of materials and techniques. He has a great respect for traditional painters and art history, yet in his work he continually tries to rebel against, and alternately embrace it.

Many of Ford’s earlier paintings examine and explore the work of the artist Hans Holbein (1497 – 1543), who was a German painter and printmaker, and part of the Northern Renaissance. He worked in England for many years and made beautiful, highly detailed portraits the English nobility.

Holbein made a famous painting in 1553 called *The Ambassadors*. This life-sized panel portrays the ambassador Francis I of France and the Bishop of Lavour, who visited London the same year. The work incorporates symbols and paradoxes, including an anamorphic (distorted) skull. Anamorphic projection means the image is painted in a distorted shape, arrived at mathematically. The true, undistorted image can only be view in reflection, in an object with has a curved or angled surface, or if the viewer is at a particular angle to the image. The word ‘anamorphosis’ is derived from the Greek prefix ‘ana’, meaning back or again, and the word ‘morphe’, meaning shape or form. This form of distortion was used to hide secret messages and symbols in an artwork.

Ford’s three-dimensional works are examples of anamorphic projection. The subject matter of his paintings reflects his interest in materials, in art history and in personal identity in contemporary life. His fascination with portraiture, the body form, or its concealment expresses a wrestling with the paradox of material form and identity or meaning. How much of who we are is reflected in our physical form? How much of what is true is expressed in the material of the world?

The anamorphic image in Ford’s work *Elegy for Enlightenment Detritus* (2006) comes from a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. The painting is called *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and was made around 1504.

Materials

Materials are very important to Juan Ford. He uses the highest quality materials to ensure that his works are archival (meaning they will last for a long time without changing). Whilst accepting that inevitably his works will show some evidence of decay, he is conscious to replicate traditional techniques so that his paintings can have the maximum longevity. He is meticulous about documenting his artworks, and views this as an important aspect of conservation.

Ford is philosophical about the future of his artworks. If the colours change over time, perhaps they will be read differently by a new audience, or perhaps not. He sees conservation as a form of great respect for an artwork.

Exploring and responding

- Research the artist Hieronymus Bosch. What was the subject matter of his work?
- Why do you think that Juan Ford has selected this particular image to work with in his artwork *Elegy for Enlightenments Detritus*? What does the title mean?
- Can you make a link between the object he has used in this artwork, and the image in the reflection?
- What do you think is the most important aspect of this artwork: the painted image, the object or the reflected image?
- Can you think of a common example of anamorphic projection? (Clue: used by advertisers).
- Can you think of different environments or situations in which anamorphic projection could be useful?

Creating and making

Make your own anamorphic artwork. There are several ways to do it. You will need to do some of your own research.

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- Research the still life practice known as Vanitas. What were the different symbols and meanings expressed in these kind of paintings?
- Select a Vanitas painting from the Flemish School and make a formal comparison with Juan Ford's painting *The Emissary* (2007).
- Research archival materials. Discover what Juan Ford is referring to when he talks about the 'best materials possible' so that the work lasts a long time.
- What is the best kind of canvas to use? How do prices vary between different types of canvas? What different qualities of oil paint can be used?
- What other types of traditional painting techniques exist? What is a 'glaze'?



Juan FORD, *Elegy for Enlightenments Detritus*, 2006, oil on plywood and rubbish bin, Courtesy of the artist, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

Ghostpatrol

"Experimentation has always been part of my work. My work spaces often turn into small shrines, indulging and entering the world I'm painting. The combination of paintings alongside the objects that inspire them gives a more rounded view into the world I'm building. Working with objects helps me learn, memorise and explore the line style and feeling I'm trying to capture in my paintings. My practice has always contained a split between creating highly archival works on paper and linen and creating more temporary sculptural works as well as street based works that are encouraged to rot rapidly."

Ghospatrol



GHOSPATROL, *tadaima swan*, 2012, acrylic and oil pastel on linen, Courtesy of the artist, Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide and Backwoods Gallery, Melbourne

Born in Hobart, Ghostpatrol is a Melbourne based artist who began his career as a street artist, predominately using the techniques of stenciling and paste-ups. He is self-taught, and learns much from friends and colleagues, both locally and overseas. His beginnings in street art was a parallel practice with zine making, printmaking and skateboarding. He draws on graffiti and illustration for inspiration.

As his practice has evolved, he has worked across a number of different mediums including acrylic painting, pen and ink drawing and sculpture which incorporates light effects. The themes he explores continue to change as he develops new relationship with materials and techniques, learning as he explores.

Currently he is looking at space exploration, cosmic scale and the 'super future'. His visual worlds invite ideas and question methods of seeing beyond our scale of existence and atomic configuration, through the concepts of curiosity-led science and quantum physics.

Materials

For Ghostpatrol, the meanings and messages in his work evolve and change as he learns about and incorporates new materials and techniques into his practice. He enjoys the openness of that approach. Working with a sketchbook is of primary importance in his process, and he gathers information and inspiration from the world he moves through.

Although he embraces the ephemeral aspect of street art, he also really enjoys working with quality archival materials such as linen, for his paintings, and beautiful papers for his drawings. A wooden sculptural work shown recently in a gallery setting was beautifully lit and precisely constructed. The sculpture is now installed in an outside setting, and the owner is happy to let the sculpture weather naturally, and possibly become a home to plants and animals. Although he found it rewarding to see the sculpture in the pristine environment of the gallery, Ghostpatrol is happy to allow his work to be subject to natural forces. He would be happy for his work to be conserved or remade in the future.



GHOSTPATROL, *Objects (detail)*, 2012, mixed media, Courtesy the artist, Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide and Backwoods Gallery, Melbourne

Exploring and responding

- The central subjects of Ghostpatrol's two-dimensional work in this exhibition are figures. He has left the background empty, leaving the paper or linen visible. What effect does that have on your feeling about the figures? How does it affect the sense of space in the works?
- In the work *tadaima swan* (2012), the figure wears strange clothing. Discuss what the clothing might indicate – especially the hat.
- What do you think the coloured dots are around the figure? Do they remind you of anything?
- Research the word 'tadaima'. What does it mean? Where does it come from?
- Comment on the artist's use of colour in his collections of objects.

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- In Ghostpatrol's collections of objects, some of the objects have faces painted on them. How does this affect the meanings and messages expressed in the work?
- Can you trace the variety of cultural influences in Ghostpatrol's work *tadaima swan*?
- Compare the composition and use of line in *tadaima swan* and in *protect* (2011).
- Do you think street art should be considered a serious art form? Imagine your local council wants to 'clean up the streets' and is about to paint over a significant site for street art. Write a letter to council expressing your views about street art and whether you think it is important for the community.

Creating and making

- Try making your own paste-ups. You can use a simple printing technique. Perhaps you can draw on some animation for inspiration.
- Your teacher might be able to find somewhere for you to put up your paste-up. Be sure to ask permission.
- Try taking an idea and expressing it in different forms, e.g. a poem, an illustration, a dance, a video or a comic strip.
- How does your idea change as it travels through different mediums?

Claire Anna Watson

"Multidisciplinary in approach, my practice explores aspects of contemporary culture and its relationship to foodstuffs, as well as humanity's relationship to nature and the impact of scientific interventions on the natural world. Ephemeral matter is the medium for manipulation and experimentation, re-contextualised to invite the viewer into a state of reflection on the natural, or not so natural, world."



Claire Anna Watson, *Myocardium*, 2012, raspberry lollies, stainless steel surgical tweezers, thread, moulding clay, acrylic paint, glue 35 x 35 x 35 cm irregular, Courtesy of the artist

Claire Anna Watson is a Melbourne based artist, curator, and arts writer. Watson studied Fine Art at Monash University and has a Graduate Certificate in Public Art from RMIT University. She creates installations, photography and video-based artwork, and has devised public art projects for the shores of the Black Sea in Turkey, a forest in Finland, the rural plains of Portugal and the snowfields of Australia. Her most recent work in *Made to last* explores food products as a site of scientific manipulation and experimentation. The video installations show luscious fruits being dissected and 'operated on', as if they were in surgery in a hospital. Watson draws a connection between the human body and plant 'bodies'. Both are subject to natural and human forces. Both suffer decay, and both have been subject to human intervention – including genetic manipulation.

She invites the viewer to consider the transitory nature of existence and asks us to question our relationship with science and the natural world, particularly plant life and food products. The juxtaposition of the different elements, images and symbols in the work produce a dark humour, not dissimilar to the biting wit of Penny Byrne's work.

Materials

Claire Anna Watson identifies two different aspects of her practice in regard to materials. Her video works can potentially be viewed for many years to come, and the images will remain unchanged. However the installations that she creates using food products may have a life of only a week or a day before they begin to show signs of decay. She does not see as viable the possibility of having her public ephemeral works recreated, because they involve so many variables and the complete environment provides the context for the artwork. Elements such as the weather, the light and the types of surrounding plant and animal life can never be exactly recreated, therefore the work would be distinctly different.

Watson also creates sculptures using food products. These can potentially be recreated, but Watson acknowledges that there would need to be clear instructions or guidelines for the curator to follow. Watson views photographs of her sculptures and video installations as images or artworks in their own right, which can provide documentation of the concept of her work, but cannot document the experience of the work in time and space. Time and space are integral elements in Watson's artwork.

Exploring and responding

- When you watch *Heterogenesis* (2012), how do you feel? Can you feel any sensations in your body?
- Which art elements do you think contribute to the sensations or emotions that the work may produce?
- How do the three-dimensional elements of *Heterogenesis* effect the way you experience the artwork?



Creating and making

In small groups discuss ideas for ephemeral installations in a public space using only biodegradable plant material such as leaves, plants, seeds, fruits, sticks or branches.

- Write up your idea as a 'proposal' for your teacher to consider for installation somewhere in your school. Discuss with your teacher what needs to be in the proposal.
- Perhaps your teacher could select some of the proposals to be constructed somewhere at school.
- Document with photographs how the work changes as the days and weeks go by.
- What forces made the work change? If you have not been able to construct your sculpture in reality, then try to predict what forces might affect it as time goes by.

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- Discuss and compare the use of colour and sound in *Sortie* (2009) and *Heterogenesis*. How do these elements add to the meanings and messages conveyed in the video installations?
- Discuss shape and form in relation to Watson's sculptural works in *Made to last*.
- Research the work of artists who have created ephemeral artworks in natural environments. Begin with Andy Goldsworthy, and extend your research from there.



Claire Anna WATSON, *Untitled3*, 2012, strawberries and cream lollies, Perspex, silica gel, synthetic turf, glue, Courtesy of the artist

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